

945

PROCEEDINGS,

ORGANIZATION,

AND

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

OF THE

"WESTERN EYE AND EAR
INFIRMARY,"

Under the Act of Legislature, passed March 10, 1835;

AT

SYRACUSE, N. Y.

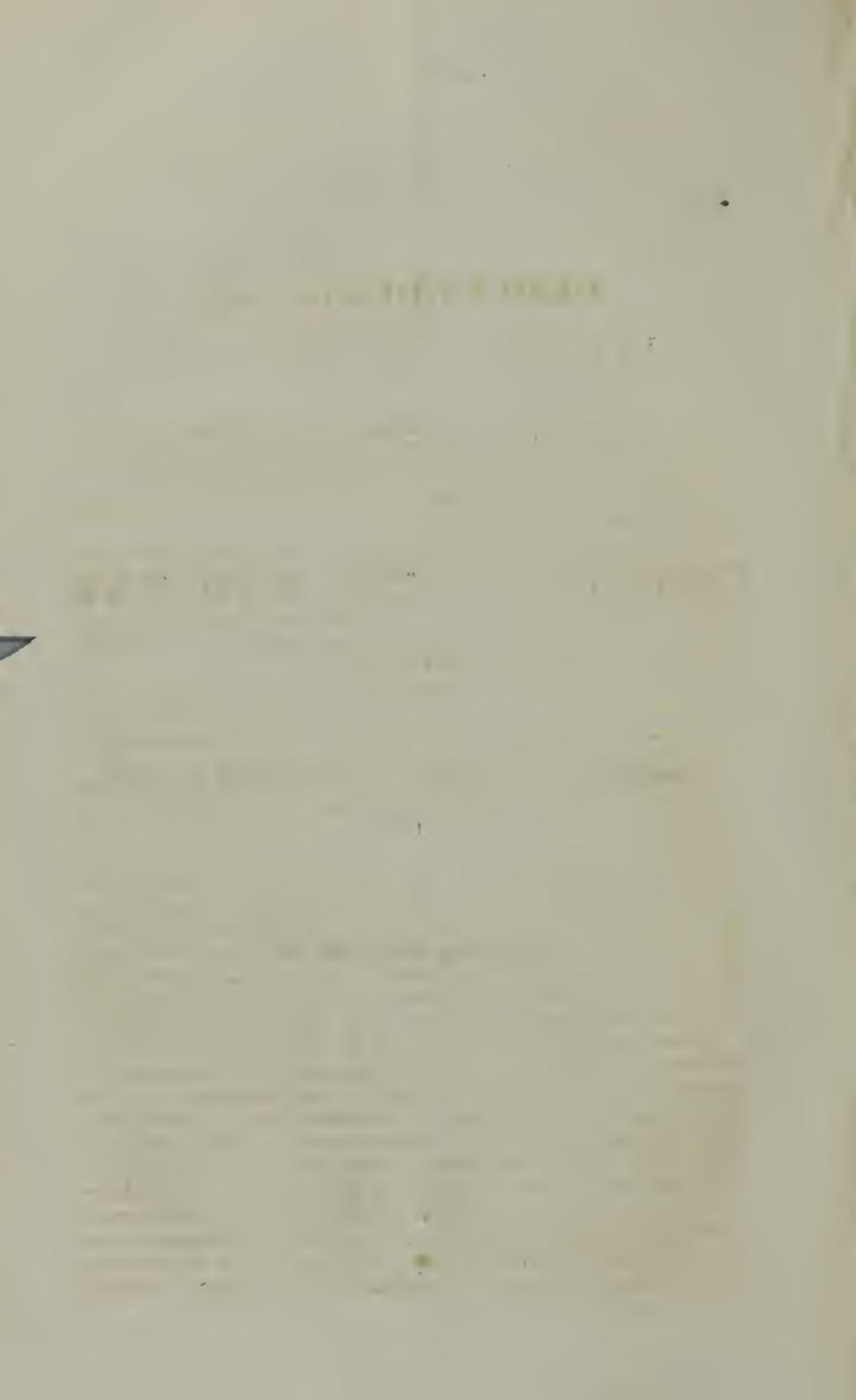
JULY 10, 1835.



S Y R A C U S E :

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1835.



PROCEEDINGS, &c.

At a meeting of the citizens of the village of Syracuse, held pursuant to notice on the 19th day of Dec., 1834, Sylvanus Tousley was called to the chair, and John Wilkinson was appointed Secretary.

The object of the meeting was explained by Dr. Hiram Hoyt, before which he read the following Report.

Mr. CHAIRMAN:—On all subjects, like the one we have met here this evening to consider, I am persuaded no diversity of opinion can exist. The object is one for founding a public charity, for curing diseases of the Eye and Ear, and if it can be shown that such an institution is needed in this section of our country, we do most confidently rely upon your liberality in sustaining it.

The nature and origin of ophthalmic complaints in this part of the State of New-York—that class of our citizens mostly subjected to its influence, and its extraordinary prevalence, are circumstances as well known to many, if not all of you, perhaps, as to myself.

The subject for our consideration has a variety of bearings to press its importance upon our attention at this time, of a separate character from this; some few of which I shall attempt briefly to lay before this meeting.

On the eleventh of January last, I commenced the treatment in this village of diseases of the eye. I need not assign my reasons for turning my attention to the study and practice of this branch of my profession; suffice it to say they were of a twofold nature, and of these and the first of all, I am readily anticipated. But in all such undertakings, another and more worthy consideration prompts the good and honest man in his determination and choice; it is the welfare of mankind.

Blindness is acknowledged by all to be one of the most dire calamities short of death, that ever befel man, and in the language of a modern writer ‘some would perhaps prefer the termination of existence to a continuance in this solitary and dependent state to which life is reduced by the privation of this precious sense.’ No other one of our senses affords half the enjoyment to human existence that this does, and its deprivation does more to distract the physical and intellectual powers of man, than the entire destruction of all the rest. Dark despondency and overwhelming grief at the approach of blindness seem to shake the citadel of the most highly gifted minds; the wreck is complete with those who possess but a small share of mental cultivation and enjoyment.

The great poet and philosopher of modern times, when reverting to his blindness, always spoke of it in a tone of anguish, characteristic of recent misfortune.

" Thus with the year,
Seasons return ; but not to me returns
Day, or the sweet approach of eve or morn,
Or sight of vernal bloom, or summer's rose,
Or flocks, or herds, or human face divine ;
But cloud instead, and ever-during dark
Surround me, from the cheerful ways of men
Cut off, and from the Book of Knowledge fair
Presented with a universal blank
Of nature's works, to me expunged and razed,
And wisdom at one entrance quite shut out."

To remedy, then, or in a measure to avert the ills growing out of diseases so ruinous to man, does appear to claim the attention and philanthropy alike of all.

It is not my intention at this time to enter into any detailed account, of diseases, either of the eye or ear, which have come under my notice ; if however, hereafter, it should be thought advisable, a tabular view of all the individual cases and the success of their treatment will be given.

The whole number of ophthalmic patients prior to the eleventh of January, as I keep no notes of cases it is not in my power to state.

On the 15th of April last, stimulated by a growing practice in ophthalmic complaints, I announced by public advertisement my intention of connecting the treatment of the diseases of the Eye and Ear with my general practice; thereby covering the entire ground of this most useful, though much neglected branch of medical surgery. Not until the fifteenth of April, then, was there any information given of an institution of the kind established in this village. I then gave it the title of the 'Syracuse Eye and Ear Infirmary.'

The success which has crowned my efforts in this branch of my profession, blended as it necessarily has been with business of a more urgent character to divert my attention from it, can be pretty clearly estimated when it is stated that upwards of two hundred patients have been received into the Infirmary in that short space of time—a period not far exceeding eight months.

I have now under my care a greater number of chronic diseases of the eye than is usual, when taken in connexion with other forms of ophthalmic diseases. I have deemed it proper on this occasion to procure the attendance of a number of these patients at this meeting. I have done so expressly for the purpose of exhibiting *in situ* the nature of their blindness ; and also to call your attention to the cause of their present individual sufferings. Some of them present a picture as heart rending perhaps as any coming within my knowledge. The sight of all is either totally destroyed or so impaired, that it is exceedingly questionable if ever they recover useful vision ; but that which lends to the picture its peculiar and extraordinary character, is the circumstance of their having voluntarily become the dupes of the most cruel and devastating practice. I allude to the Thomsonian system. Had it not been for this system, a fugitive, a murderous system ! thousands of our fellow beings would yet have been alive, and tens of thousands,

who do not, would now be enjoying the solace and enlivening influence of a summer's sun, and the full vigor of health.

But how is it? I only ask you to look at the eyes here placed before you—a disorganized mass of matter, and then answer me. If you possess the feelings of abhorrence, you will view the cause of all this suffering with disgust—if indignation, suppress it if you can—if pity, bewail. Shall we say then, with this blighting and appalling example of a wayward and reckless system of practice—shall we say then, we will attempt nothing in “weeding out the world of these noxious things?”

Well would it have been for mankind however, if the evil we complain of was wholly confined here. On this ground I offer the language of another, who it must be supposed is possessed of too much self respect “to set down aught in malice,” while on the other hand it seems he has too much firmness ‘in any thing to extenuate.’ The following is the language of the chief Surgeon of the New York Eye Infirmary upon this subject. Speaking of some of the most common results of ophthalmia, the writer says that the ‘*granular conjunctiva* of the eye lids with vascular and opaque cornea, is an extremely common disease in every part of the state of New York, but more particularly in our northwestern counties; and not a few of the inhabitants of those counties are permanently and irremediably blind from the long continuance of this most unpleasant consequence of purulent ophthalmia. Such patients are constantly presenting themselves at the New York Eye Infirmary, and in a large portion of cases the result may be fairly attributed to *improper treatment* in the acute stage of inflammation.’ The writer further adds, ‘were I not a daily witness of the mischief arising from the improper use of this remedy, (the writer refers here to the use of the knife,) I could not have supposed, that what is so *evidently wrong* should so often be done. But with the evidence constantly before me, I feel it absolutely necessary to caution the student of this branch of surgery against an operation he will often be advised to perform.’ I was once called to examine a patient blind of one eye, from an operation performed by a gentleman sometime since in this vicinity. The doctor attempted to convince his patient that cataract was the cause of the obstruction to light. The operation was performed by pushing a *thumb lancet* into the eye, in the direction of the axis of vision, and on a level with the lower part of the pupillary margin of the iris, till it had deeply entered the vitreous humor. The consequence was, as might be supposed, an entire evacuation of the contents of the globe of the eye, with collapse, and the total destruction of sight. It is the great object now of our profession, as it ever has been, to cultivate the different branches of the science as much as the nature of the case admits, separately, and in detail. The utility of this method appears very obvious. In doing so a more happy distribution of labor is made among a greater variety of discursive talent, so that after years of research the cultivators are thereby enabled to bring back to the general store house, a greater fund of useful and practical knowledge, than could be in any other way achieved. On this ground, stand our Hospitals, Infirmaries, Dispensaries, &c. and indeed all such institutions, whether founded for charitable purposes or not. It will be acknowledged then, that if such institutions were more common, they would be more generally felt and

more universally appreciated. The remote distance from this place of the New York Eye Infirmary, its location far from the action of the most powerful predisponent and exciting causes of ophthalmic diseases ; the expense of getting there, and the high price of board, it is very plain that the object for which it was intended is not, neither can it be wholly answered. If, as it appears by the annual reports of the New York Eye Infirmary, that institution is doing its quota of good, I think there can be no great question, that another located here with all the advantages, when contrasted with the above, (if indeed exciting causes of the most powerful character are to be considered in the light of *advantages*) would, if properly conducted, not long be found in the wake of that; or any other institution of the kind now in operation.

The object then, of this meeting is to deliberate on a course best calculated to subserve the interest of this community, in relation to a public institution for curing diseases of the Eye and Ear, to be located in this village.

Syracuse being the topographical centre of the state, flourishing as it is, far beyond the most sanguine expectations of her citizens, the question is, shall we let tamely pass this favorable opportunity for founding this public charity ?

With these considerations, gentlemen, I leave it with you to adopt such measures as in your judgment, will best carry into full operation this charitable and benevolent undertaking.

HIRAM HOYT, M. D.

The following Resolutions were then offered by D. G. Montgomery, Esq. and unanimously adopted.

Resolved, That in the opinion of this meeting, the establishment of an institution in this village by act of the legislature, for the treatment of diseases of the eye and ear would be a great public benefit to the interior and western regions of the state ; and if based and conducted on correct principles, would merit the countenance and support of the liberal and humane.

Resolved, That the Infirmary whose history and progress in this village have been detailed by Doct. HIRAM HOYT, in a report read by him before this meeting, be the basis upon which such institution shall be founded.

Resolved, That a committee of twenty persons be appointed to draw up and circulate a memorial to the legislature for the incorporation of such institution.

Resolved, That Mr. Montgomery, Mr. Baldwin, Mr. Wilkinson, Mr. Wallace, Mr. Burnet, Mr. Putnam, Dr. Hoyt, Mr. Forman, Dr. Smith, Mr. Corning, Mr. Fleming, Mr. Forbes, Dr. Hanchett, Dr. Ball, Mr. Hess, Dr. Clary, Mr. Strong, Mr. Clark, Mr. Tousley, and Mr. Marsh constitute such committee.

Resolved, That the report read to this meeting by Dr. Hoyt, with the resolutions be published in the papers printed in this county and in the Albany Argus.

S. TOUSLEY, Ch'n;

JOHN WILKINSON, Sec'y.

AN ACT TO INCORPORATE THE WESTERN EYE AND
EAR INFIRMARY—PASSED MARCH 10, 1835.

The People of the State of New-York, represented in Senate and Assembly, do enact as follows:

SECTION 1. There shall be established and located in the village of Syraeuse, in the county of Onondaga, a charitable institution, by the name of "The Western Eye and Ear Infirmary."

§ 2. Sylvanus Tousley, Hiram Hoyt, John W. Adams, William I. Dodge, Harvey Baldwin, David G. Montgomery, John White, Samuel S. Forman, John G. Forbes, Moses D. Burnet, Richard S. Corning, Elisha F. Wallace and John W. Hanchett, and such other persons as may become members of said institution by contributing to its funds, are hereby constituted a body corporate by the name aforesaid.

§ 3. The corporation shall have power to prescribe rules and regulations for the admission of its members and their government, the election of its officers and their duties.

§ 4. The sole object of said institution is to afford relief gratuitously to such poor and indigent persons as may be afflicted with diseases of the eye and ear.

§ 5. The corporation may purchase and hold real and personal estate necessary for the objects of the institution: but the same, at any one time, shall not exceed five thousand dollars.

§ 6. The said corporation shall possess the general powers, and be subject to the general restrictions and liabilities prescribed in the third title of the eighteenth chapter of the first part of the Revised Statutes.

§ 7. The legislature may at any time alter, modify or repeal this act.

At a meeting of the "Western Eye and Ear Infirmary," incorporated by an act of the Legislature, passed March 10, 1835, held at the office of David G. Montgomery, Esq., in the village of Syraeuse, pursuant to public notice, on the 20th day of June, 1835, at which the following named persons were present, to wit:—Samuel S. Forman, Moses D. Burnet, William I. Dodge, Elisha F. Wallace, John W. Hanchett, Hiram Hoyt, and David G. Montgomery; on motion, SAMUEL S. FORMAN was called to the chair, and David G. Montgomery appointed secretary.

Whereupon, on motion, *Resolved*, That the secretary of this meeting procure a book in which to keep a record of the byc-laws and proceedings of said Institution; and also a plain brass seal, with the words, "*The Western Eye and Ear Infirmary Seal*," engraved thereon, in a circular form, and with the word *Seal* in the centre.

Resolved, That William I. Dodge, Hiram Hoyt, and David G. Montgomery, be a committee to prepare and report to the next meeting of the members of this institution the rules and regulations thereof.

Resolved, That at the next meeting of the members of this corporation an election of its officers shall be had, and that the secretary of this meeting notify the absent members of the time and place of such meeting.

Resolved, That the meeting now adjourn: All of which said resolutions were unanimously adopted by the meeting.

DAVID G. MONTGOMERY, Secretary.

At a meeting of the members of the Western Eye and Ear Infirmary, held pursuant to notice, at the office of David G. Montgomery in the village of Syracuse, on the 10th day of July, 1835, the following named persons, to wit: Sylvanus Tousley, William I. Dodge, John W. Hanchett, Elisha F. Wallace, Moses D. Burnet, Hiram Hoyt, and David G. Montgomery, were present; and, on motion, *SYLVANUS TOUSLEY* was called to the chair, and *David G. Montgomery* appointed secretary.

The minutes of the preceding meeting having been read and approved, the committee appointed to draft the Rules and Regulations of the Infirmary, reported to the meeting the following, to wit:

RULES AND REGULATIONS OF THE WESTERN EYE AND EAR INFIRMARY.

1. The Board of Trustees of the Institution shall consist of thirteen persons, to be chosen by and from the members of said Institution, at its annual meeting.
2. The officers of the Institution shall consist of a President, two Vice-Presidents, a Secretary, a Treasurer, one Surgeon, two Assistant Surgeons, two Consulting Surgeons, and an Executive Committee, to consist of five persons.
3. The officers above mentioned, except the Assistant and Consulting Surgeons and Apothecary, shall be chosen from the Board of Trustees.
4. Every person who shall subscribe and pay into the funds of the Institution the sum of twenty-five dollars and upwards, shall be constituted a life member, with the privilege of retaining under treatment, at all times, free of expense, at the Infirmary, one patient.
5. Each member of this incorporation shall have one vote in the choice of officers of the Institution.
6. The annual meeting of the Institution shall take place at the village of Syracuse, on the first Monday in May, in each year, hereafter, at which time all its officers shall be elected.
7. Any member may, if he think proper, attach to his subscription, if of one hundred dollars or upwards, the words "permanent fund," in which case his whole subscription shall be added to the permanent fund, and the interest only shall be used by the directors.
8. No other than poor persons are to be admitted into the Infirmary as patients.
9. One student of medicine from each county in the state, shall be allowed to attend the practice and lectures of the Surgeons of said

Institution, free of expense, on presenting a proper certificate from the Medical Society of the county where he belongs, recommending him for that purpose.

10. Books of subscription shall at all times be kept open, and the humane and philanthropic respectfully be invited to aid with their means, the objects of the Institution.

11. It shall be the duty of the Treasurer to keep a correct account of all the monies received into, and all the monies paid out of the Treasury, and make a report thereof, at the annual meeting of said Institution.

12. It shall be the duty of the Executive Committee to examine applicants for admission into the Infirmary—to draw on the Treasurer for all such monies as shall be thought proper in advancing the objects of said Institution, and to order and direct all its affairs.

13. It shall be the duty of the Surgeons to make an annual report of all the cases that may have been treated at the Infirmary—the number of patients cured or relieved, and the number of those remaining.

14. A special meeting of the directors of the incorporation shall be called by the President, whenever he is requested in writing by two members of the board.

The report of the said committee, was, on motion, unanimously adopted; and the meeting then proceeded to the election of the officers of the Infirmary for the ensuing year—whereupon the following persons were duly elected, on nomination, *viva voce*, such officers, to wit:

SYLVANUS TOUSLEY, HARVEY BALDWIN, M. D. BURNET, D. G. MONTGOMERY, WILLIAM I. DODGE, HIRAM HOYT, JOHN W. HANCHETT, HARVEY W. EATON, WILLIAM TAYLOR, SAMUEL H. HEALY, DANIEL DAYTON,	<i>President.</i> <i>Vice-Presidents.</i> <i>Secretary.</i> <i>Treasurer.</i> <i>Surgeon.</i> <i>Ass't Surgeons.</i> <i>Consulting do</i> <i>Apothecary.</i>
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SAMUEL S. FORMAN, JOHN G. FORBES, D. G. MONTGOMERY, E. F. WALLACE, JOHN W. ADAMS,	<i>Executive Committee.</i>
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Resolved, On motion, That the thirteen persons named in the act incorporating the Infirmary, passed March 10, 1835, be the Board of Directors thereof for the ensuing year.

Resolved, That this meeting now adjourn *sine die*.

D. G. MONTGOMERY, Secretary.

REMARKS OF DR. HOYT AT THE ELECTION OF
OFFICERS OF THE WESTERN EYE
AND EAR INFIRMARY.

I rise gentlemen with no ordinary degree of feeling to tender you my thanks for this exhibition of your confidence in electing me to the office of Chief Surgeon of this new, but as I trust, most valuable, of charitable institutions. Older and more experienced in the practice of medicine you could have easily called to this responsible, yet in many respects, most eligible situation. But, gentlemen, if an honorable zeal and attachment to the science of medicine, has in any degree influenced your choice, permit me to say, your confidence has not been misplaced. For so distinguished a favour, therefore, it would give me pleasure to offer you some satisfactory, or adequate return; but I can only pledge myself, that so far as my time and talents will permit me, your wishes and the best interests of this institution shall at all times be diligently and carefully observed. The establishment of an institution of the character we have this day, under the charter of the state, been enabled to found, cannot fail to be particularly interesting, not only to all patrons of medical science, but to all sincere and devoted friends of mankind. The utility of such an institution, at the present day, for the study and practice of ophthalmic surgery, few if any, with the exception, perhaps, of some *pseudo* or vindictive *jesuit* of medicine will ever undertake to question. I took occasion, at our village meeting, on the 19th of December last, for the purpose of adopting measures for the perpetuation of the benefits of this institution, and constituting it one of charity, to call your attention to some remarks made by the Chief Surgeon of the New York Eye Infirmary, in relation to the nature and treatment of ophthalmic complaints, in this particular section of the state. What I then said was based upon a very limited knowledge of ophthalmic diseases. Subsequent experience, however, has fully confirmed my belief in the propriety and justice of those remarks.

At page 272 of the same work from which I then quoted, the editor makes use of the following language. "To avoid doing our patient injury is certainly of as much importance as to do him good. I shall therefore take occasion, whenever necessary, to warn the student of medicine and young practitioner against the use of remedies which I know to be common in our country, where they are evidently prejudicial. Of these, one of the worst in inflammation of the conjunctiva either simple or purulent is warm poultices applied to the eyes. I have repeatedly seen young infants brought to the New York Eye Infirmary, with the cornea of both eyes sloughed, and the organs entirely ruined, after having been kept under poultices, even as long as six weeks without intermission; and the practitioner perhaps has not, during the whole period once examined the patients eyes! I have under my care" continues this writer "a young gentleman, whose eyes were kept constantly under poultices for more than a month, where the cornea are both com-

pletely opaque and vascular, and the lids loaded with granulations. }
need not say, that he is totally blind, and many months will elapse before he recovers his sight. Such cases are by no means uncommon and their result is a sufficient proof of the impropriety of the practice."

Nine tenths of all patients who resort to this place to obtain relief from blindness, are those who have suffered long from the ravages of disease. Most of whom have been, if at all, very improperly treated. Such diseases it is evident require a longer duration in the use of remedies, than those of a more acute and incipient a character. The want of a proper discrimination in this particular, therefore, has occasionally created much fear and apprehension on the part of both patient and friends, in relation to the utility of remediate means in such advanced stages of the disease :—More especially has this been the case, when particular members of the profession, by their uncourteous insinuations, failing themselves to retain long the confidence of their patients, have attempted by almost every variety of subterfuge in their power, to destroy the growing reputation of this institution. Without wishing to excite any untoward feelings in the minds of my medical friends in this particular portion of community, I have taken occasion once more to quote some of the many remarks of one the first ophthalmic surgeons in this country. I have done so expressly, lest otherwise my own denunciations of the abuse which patients so invariably receive in this particular section of the state, might be obnoxious to a misconstruction. I conceive it to be unmanly injustice to put forth any views in this public manner, detrimental to the character or interest of any portion of the profession, which are not advanced from a strong and settled conviction of their propriety, and in strict accordance with truth and justice. From neglect or bad management, all are aware, that acute diseases, and especially those of the eye, are uncommonly apt to break off into a chronic state—varied in their pathology, multiplied in their abnormal phenomena, and exceedingly doubtful as it regards their issue.

It is the object of this institution, therefore, not only to prevent acute diseases from becoming chronic, but by bringing under daily ocular inspection those that are already thus advanced ; and with the improved state of medical knowledge at the present day, to restore again, such patients to health and usefulness. The reputation of this institution, therefore, it is evident, having its sphere of action in so sparce and scattered a population, will be for the present obliged to stand on such laborious, yet, as I trust, most substantial vantage-ground. The establishment of an institution of the character we are led to contemplate in the founding of this, seems to involve in itself, an interest of a twofold nature. It presents, in the first place, perhaps, the only true and legitimate objects of charity, on whom we can at all times freely bestow our bounties, without the liability of being deceived by the most gross and repulsive imposition ; but its paramount importance in our view of it, is that of teaching sounder doctrines of ophthalmic surgery, than what have hitherto been inculcated amongst students of medicine, and the younger class of the profession ; affording thereby to them, such facilities for the acquisition of that kind of knowledge, which is not at the present day, in this country, to be obtained from any other source

whatever ; and which, if properly applied, will ever be sure to lead them to a correct and successful practice in this particular branch of their profession.

Entertaining such views, may we not look with confidence to that wisdom, which has created it, to maintain and prolong its existence ? Under its present organization and the patronage of the state, we have every reason to expect, that this institution will be sustained, and that the period of its infancy will be but short. It will ever be my object, associated with this honorable board, and supported by those medical gentlemen, in whose judgment and skill I repose the most unbounded confidence, to obtain for this institution a public and universal acknowledgement of its worth and integrity. With these considerations, gentlemen, I leave the concerns of this institution in your hands, wishing it all the success and prosperity it can well hope to receive, in accordance with the true design and spirit of its undertaking.

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